

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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R 241228Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3544

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 4833

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: POL, IT, US  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI

1. I PAID MY INITIAL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI  
AFTERNOON OF MARCH 23 IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF GENUINE CORDIALITY  
AND MUTUAL CONFIDENCE AND INTEREST. THE MEETING LASTED  
TWO HOURS.

2. IN SOME DETAIL I DELINEATED FOR ANDREOTTI THE PROFILE  
OF AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD ITALY AS IT HAS TAKEN SHAPE IN  
THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND SUGGESTED THE DIRECTIONS IT  
WOULD LIKELY TAKE IN TWO SPECIFIC AREAS: VISA POLICY AND  
OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CONTACTS WITH THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST  
PARTY. IN THE LATTER INSTANCES I INDICATED THAT THE FORMU-  
LATION OF POLICY WAS STILL IN PROCESS AND I WOULD WELCOME  
THE PRIME MINISTER'S OBSERVATIONS WHICH I ASSURED HIM WOULD  
BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION.

3. ANDREOTTI THANKED ME FOR MY FRANK EXPLANATION OF U.S.  
POLICY, AND ASKED ME TO CONVEY TO THE PRESIDENT AND  
VICE PRESIDENT HIS WARMEST REGARD. HE RESPONDED TO  
MY POLICY EXPOSITION IN AN IMPRESSIVELY ORGANIZED AND  
COHERENT FASHION. IF AS I INDICATED ITALY IS IN THE  
INNER CIRCLE OF THE U.S. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP SO,  
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HE ASSERTED, IS THE REVERSE TRUE. THE RELATIONSHIP WITH  
THE U.S. WITH NATO AND WITH THE EEC IS A CONSTANT IN  
ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND A CONSTANT IN THE CALCULATIONS  
OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY. THE PLATFORM OF THE  
MINORITY GOVERNMENT THAT EMERGED FROM LAST YEAR'S ELECTIONS  
IS BASED ON COMPLETE ATTACHMENT TO THE EEC AND NATO. THE  
PCI, UPON WHOSE ABSTENTION THE GOVERNMENT DEPENDS, MADE NO

OBJECTION. THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND, ANDREOTTI SAID, THAT THE PCI HAD CHANGED. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE CHANGE IS IN ITS PROGRAM OR ITS PUBLIC POSTURES AND WHETHER IT IS IN THE PARTY'S STRATEGY OR ITS TACTICS. ONLY THE FUTURE CAN BRING AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. THERE IS FURTHER THE QUESTION WHETHER THE PCI CAN BE GENUINELY INDEPENDENT OF OUTSIDE TIES. BY TRADITION THE PCI HAS HAD STRONG LINKS TO THE USSR. RECENTLY IT HAS MADE A NUMBER OF DECLARATIONS OF ITS AUTONOMY. HE HIMSELF BELIEVED IN THE SINCERITY OF BERLINGUER AND OTHER LEADERS OF THE PCI IN THE REGARD BUT FELT THERE WAS SOME DOUBT THAT THEY HAD THE BROAD SUPPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PCI. THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WILL BE PARTICULARLY IMPORANT IN SHOWING THE SOVIET HAND. THE USSR IS NOT FAVORABLE TO THE STRENGTHENING OF EUROPE. WILL IT THEN LIMIT ITSELF TO CRITICIZING MOVES THAT BOLSTER THE COHESION OF EUROPE OR WILL IT TAKE A HAND IN INTERNAL WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY DECISION MAKING?

4. IN ITALY'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION, ANDREOTTI OBSERVED, THE ABSTENTION OF THE PCI IN PARLIAMENT IS OF COURSE IMPORTANT. IT REPRESENTED HOWEVER A KIND OF IMPASSE FROM WHICH THERE ARE TWO EXITS AS HE SAW IT. ONE COULD ENVISAGE GOING BACK TO A FORMAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY. AND IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO FORESEE THE PCI PROGRESS TO REAL AUTONOMY AND "EUROPEANIZATION". TO THE EXTENT THAT THOSE ARE ALTERNATIVES THEY CREATE SOME CONFUSION FOR THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES. THE PSI HAS STRONG LINKS TO THE PCI, AT LEAST IN THE WAY OF ALLIANCES  
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IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT, STILL IT CRITICIZES THE DC FOR ITS WEAKNESS IN DEALING WITH THE PCI. THE POLICIES OF THE SMALL PARTIES OSCILLATE BETWEEN THE NEED FOR GREAT CARE IN DEALING WITH THE PCI TO DECLARATIONS OF THE NEED TO COLLABORATE WITH IT. BUT ANDREOTTI AFFIRMED, HIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT DISPOSED TO MAKE COMPROMISES. WHEN IT BECOMES NO LONGER POSSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT FRAGILE SITUATION TO CONTINUE, THEN THE DC WOULD HAVE TO BRING IT DOWN. IT WOULD ADMITTEDLY BE RISKY. HISTORICALLY, EARLY ELECTIONS HAVE NEVER SOLVED ANYTHING. BUT SOMETIMES, LIKE SURGERY, THEY ARE INEVITABLE.

5. THAT, SAID ANDREOTTI, IS THE ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH WE OPERATE IN THE PARLIAMENT. SO FAR, HOWEVER, IT HAS BEEN WORKING. NONE OF THE LEGISLATION WE HAVE PROPOSED HAS BEEN VOTED DOWN. THERE HAS BEEN MODIFICATION MADE OF PROPOSED LAWS, BUT NO MORE THAN IS NORMAL IN A PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION. HOWEVER, THE POINT HAS BEEN REACHED WHERE THERE COULD BE A CONFRONTATION OVER THE APPROVAL OF THE

DECREE LAW DESIGNED TO MEET THE CONDITIONS IMPOSED BY IMF.  
(SEE SEPTTEL.)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 4833

EXDIS

6. ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO MY REMARKS ON THE PRECEPTS OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD ITALY, ANDREOTTI WELCOMED THE PRECISION IN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND INDIFFERENCE TO THEM. HE THOUGHT THAT THE EMBASSY HAD BEEN IN ERROR IN THE PAST IN FAILING TO OBSERVE THAT DISTINCTION, BOTH IN 1963 AND 1972, FOR EXAMPLE. IN THE FORMER YEAR THERE WAS THE FEELING THAT THE U.S. EMBASSY WAS SUPPORTING THE SOCIALISTS TO THE EXCLUSION OF ALL OTHER PARTIES, IN THE LATTER THE SENSE THAT THE EMBASSY HAD STRONG (CLANDESTINE) RELATIONS WITH REIGHTIST GROUPS. AT THE LEAST, IN HIS VIEW, THE EMBASSY POSITION OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ITALY. THAT THE POSITION HAD NOT BEEN EXPLAINED WAS SEEN AS INDIFFERENCE.

7. ANDREOTTI EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE TOO AT MY ASSURANCEST THAT CHANGES IN POLICY WOULD BE PRUDENT AND GRADUAL. IT WAS IMPORTANT HE THOUGHT THAT OUR ACTIONS NOT BE SUBJECT TO INTERPRETATIONS THAT WE WERE EITHER INDIFFERENT OR THAT WE WERE "SUPPORTING THE OTHERS". (RAD P.C.I.) IN A COUNTRY, LIKE GERMANY, WHERE THERE WERE TWO MAJOR POLITICAL FORCES, BOTH DEMOCRATIC, THAT KIND OF INTERPRETATION OF U.S. ACTIONS MIGHT BE RELATIVELY HARMLESS. IN ITALY THOSE CONDITIONS DO NOT PREVAIL.

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8. WITH REGARD TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN OUR VISA POLICY, ANDREOTTI SAID, "IT IS MY IMPRESSION THAT IT IS MORE LOGICAL TO BE MORE LIBERAL". THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC AND NON-DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES IS "THE OPEN DOOR". HE COULD SEE NO REAL DIFFICULTY IN A LESS DISCRIMINATORY POLICY ON THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS -- IN THE HELSINKI CONTEXT -- AS IT SERVES TO REINFORCE THE DEMOCRATIC IMAGE OF THE U.S. THE PROBLEM FOR BOTH ITALY AND FRANCE IN AN ALTERATION OF U.S. VISA POLICY COMES IN HOW IT IS PRESENTED. BUT IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT HELSINKI CREATED A NEW SITUATION. IN ANY EVENT ANDREOTTI AGREED THAT VISITS BY MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST PARTIES TO THE U.S. WERE GENERALLY A GOOD THING. AT LEAST IT WOULD HELP TO EDUCATE THEM ABOUT OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.

9. ANDREOTTI FURTHER AGREED THAT SOME BROADENING OF EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH THE PCI, WITHIN THE DIMENSIONS I DESCRIBED, WOULD BE USEFUL. HE BELIEVED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE PCI AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL WERE "NORMAL". AND HE THOUGHT THAT SOME ENLARGEMENT OF OUR CONTACTS WITH PARTY FIGURES BELOW THE LEADERSHIP LEVEL WOULD CAUSE NO GREAT DIFFICULTY. I SUGGESTED ILLUSTRATIVELY THAT I MIGHT PLAN A COUPLE OF EARLY MEETINGS WITH THE ITALIAN PRESS, TO ONE OF WHICH I WOULD INVITE THE CORRESPONDENT OF THE PCI'S UNITA AND TO THE OTHER OF WHICH I WOULD INVITE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MSI'S IL SECOLO. I POINTED OUT THAT AS MY WIFE'S FAMILY HAD LEFT ITALY TO ESCAPE FASCISM, NO ONE COULD ACCUSE ME OF FASCIST SYMPATHIES, AND CERTAINLY NO ONE COULD ACCUSE ME OF BEING PRO-COMMUNIST. ANDREOTTI COUNTERED WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT I INVITE BOTH CORRESPONDENTS ON THE SAME OCCASION AND THAT WE USE AS JUSTIFICATION THAT I WAS MAINTAINING CONTACTS WITH THE PRESS REPRESENTING ALL PARTIES REPRESENTED IN THE PARLIAMENT. (NOTE: A USEFUL FORMULATION THAT BREAKS WITH THE ARTIFICIAL PCI INSTRUMENT OF THE SO-CALLED "CONSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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ARC"USED TO EXCLUDE THE MSI FROM VARIOUS FORA.) ANDREOTTI SAID HE BELIEVED WE WOULD HAVE LITTLE TROUBLE WITH SUCH A POSITION, RECALLING THAT WHEN A GROUP OF ITALIAN NEWS MEN WAS INVITED TO THE USSR THE MSI REPRESENTATIVE WAS REFUSED ADMITTANCE AND THE ENTIRE GROUP (INCLUDING THE PCI MEMBER) STOOD BEHIND HIM AND REFUSED TO GO. WE MIGHT, ANDREOTTI ADMITTED, GET SOME OBJECTIONS TO MORE CONTACTS WITH THE PCI FROM MEMBERS OF THE REPUBLICAN AND SOCIALIST PARTIES. BUT, IN HIS VIEW,

IT WAS BETTER TO HAVE THOSE CONTACTS, AND HAVE THEM  
OPENLY, THAN TO CONTINUE PAST PRACTICES.

10. MY DISCUSSION WITH ANDREOTTI CONCLUDED WITH AN  
EXCHANGE ON OUR DESIRE FOR ITALIAN SUPPORT ON NATO  
AEW, WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE TELEGRAM.  
GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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